

Accounts of teacher sexual misconduct have inundated headlines across our country. In 2004, a study required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 reported that an estimated 4.5 million children are subject to sexual misconduct by a school employee sometime between kindergarten and 12th grade—that's nearly 1 in 10 students that are targets of sexual misconduct during their school career. As far as I'm concerned, that's one too many.

Further, a 2007 seven-month Associated Press investigation found a total of 2,570 educators across the nation were punished for sexual misconduct from 2001–2005, representing about a quarter of all educator misconduct cases in that time period.

More than a dozen states have considered legislation to strengthen laws for screening and reporting of sexual misconduct by educators last year—many of which became law. However, without adopting systematic policies and procedures at the national level all states remain vulnerable when hiring school employees from states with mediocre reporting procedures and lackluster ethical standards. Our classrooms deserve much more than a piecemeal effort that leaves our nation's schools exposed to predators moving from state to state.

Ernie Allen, President and CEO of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children said, "This Act brings long-overdue recognition to the problem of child sexual exploitation in the school system."

It is abundantly clear that the system we have in place has failed our students—repeatedly. Before we read about another teacher assaulting yet another student or another classroom shaken by another breach of trust, now—not later—let us give schools the tools they need to keep repeat sexual offenders from preying on students within the very institutions that should be a safe-haven for our children.

We have a unique opportunity before us to empower educators and parents nationwide and make it crystal clear we will not allow those who would prey on young, vulnerable minds to compromise the integrity of our school system and tarnish an honorable profession. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation, ensuring the safety of our children.

IN MEMORY OF BETHEA R. HOOK

**HON. JOE WILSON**

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, February 23, 2009*

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, on February 17th, Mr. Bethea R. Hook of Lexington County, South Carolina passed away. Mr. Hook was a cherished member of his community, and spent his lifetime in service to his country and his neighbors as a member of the Mt. Hermon Lutheran Church, president of the Church Council, a Sunday School Superintendent, and scout master of Boy Scout Troup No. 356 to name just a few of his many accomplishments. He was a leader in his community as the owner of Hook's Flowers and vital to the establishment of the U.S. Highway 1 Flea Market. He was also an active member and former president of the Woodmen of the World.

He answered the call of his generation and served as a Navy Chief Boatswain's Mate dur-

ing World War II and went on to be an advocate for his fellow veterans as Commander of the American Legion Post No. 7.

At this time, our thoughts and prayers are with Mr. Hook's family—including his wife of 62 years, Margie Eargle Hook, his sons, Norman Bethea Hook and Richard Jefferson Hook, his daughter, Myra Darlene Kinard, and his three grandchildren, Tradd Bethea Hook, Ashley Ann Hook, and Richard Tyler Hook.

COMMENDING MR. GARY STILTS

**HON. JO ANN EMERSON**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, February 23, 2009*

Mrs. EMERSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend Mr. Gary Stilts, Wappapello Lake Operations Manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Mr. Stilts is retiring this week after a long and distinguished career of more than 30 years of federal service. Nearly 28 of those years have been in the service of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Wappapello Lake in the Eighth Congressional District.

During his time at Wappapello, Mr. Stilts has dramatically improved public access to the natural resources offered at the lake, and he has forged key local partnerships that enabled the placement of fishing piers, access points, and a fish cleaning station at the lake. Major flood control improvements and an important transportation infrastructure project have been implemented at Wappapello Lake during his term of service as well.

The remarkable thing about Mr. Stilts has been his ability to make Wappapello Lake a true member of the local community. The lake is important to families, for recreation, and to businesses, for the tourism it draws. Under Mr. Stilts's leadership, Wappapello Lake twice won the Natural Resources Project of the Year Award, in 1999 and again in 2008.

In a district with as many acres of fields, forests and, yes, lakes, as the Eighth Congressional District of Missouri, good stewardship is at the pinnacle of importance. Mr. Stilts has left his mark on Wappapello Lake and the surrounding area by first and foremost being a good steward. His hard work and good advocacy for Wappapello Lake have made it an important fixture on the list of the very best natural resources in our state. I wish him the best in his retirement and thank him for his excellent service to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and to the citizens of the Eighth Congressional District of Missouri.

THE STUDENT INTERNET SAFETY ACT

**HON. ADAM H. PUTNAM**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, February 23, 2009*

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, on January 28, 2009, I introduced the Student Internet Safety Act, legislation that would provide our Nation's schools more leeway in teaching children about the dangers associated with predators on the Internet.

Everyday, children and teens alike rely on the internet for multiple resources. Whether it's

research for a school project, visiting an online social network such as Facebook or Myspace, or checking movie times for a local theater, our Nation's youth remains increasingly active online and it is paramount that they are aware of the potential risks of online predators and know how to stay safe online.

While many parents continue to educate their children about the importance of online safety, this is an important message that our schools should have the ability to reinforce as well. Currently, school districts that receive grants under the Ed Tech Program and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program from the U.S. Department of Education may use the Federal funds for a wide variety of authorized activities, such as drug and violence prevention activities, establishing and maintaining a school safety hotline, or developing, enhancing, or implementing information technology courses.

The Student Internet Safety Act would expand the list of authorized activities to allow schools to develop and implement programs that promote the safe use of the Internet by students, such as programs that educate students about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with individuals on social networking Web sites and in chat rooms; protect students against online predators, cyberbullying, or unwanted exposure to inappropriate material; or promote involvement by parents in the use of the Internet by their children.

I am encouraged by the support this legislation has received both locally and nationally as well. Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd stated, "All of us must take a proactive action to teach our kids how to stay safe online. This legislation takes important steps to make this happen. Nothing is more important to our communities' future than the safety and well being of our children." In addition, Ernie Allen, President and CEO of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children said, "The internet holds tremendous potential for our Nation's youth. But we must educate young people about how to prevent online victimization so they may have safer experiences online."

Given the vital role the Internet plays in schools across the Nation, the Student Internet Safety Act would give schools the ability to educate their students about staying safe in a rapidly growing online community. We teach our children how to look both ways before crossing the street; we also need to teach them the safety rules for the information superhighway.

I welcome the support of my colleagues and look forward to working together to ensure the safety of our children from the dangers associated with predators on the Internet.

IN RECOGNITION OF MARTHA SCOTT SMITH

**HON. JOE WILSON**

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, February 23, 2009*

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, this Thursday, February 26th, the Palmetto Society of United Way of the Midlands will be honoring their Humanitarian of the Year Award recipient Martha Scott Smith. Martha is State Director for AT&T—Public Affairs in South Carolina and an extraordinary